

H-Looney-Chesley-20050311133003

To: Julie L. Sigall
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

Date: 03/11/2005

From: Chesley H. Looney
Address1: 3406 Notre Dame St
City: Hyattsville
State: MD
Zip: 20783
Email: clooney@compuserve.com
Phone: 301-422-7753

Comment:

I've had an experience with an orphaned work that may be of interest having to do with a musical work (Cinema 76) used in a Continental Insurance pavilion. The following digest of several email conversations gives the picture;

: 12181 (C) S0/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
19-Oct-03 09:51:50
Sb: Compliments and Query
Fm: Ches Looney 73016, 1336
To: webmaster@boychoirs.org

My compliments on your BoyChoir webpage. I'm the father of 4 boys and a girl and most of them have benefitted by membership in children and youth choirs during their formative years. My wife, Ruth, and I are enjoying adult choir participation in our "mature" years.

Your web page is very interesting and inclusion of performance recordings makes it even richer.

I have a puzzlement however, The Continental Soldier was the centerpiece for Continental Insurance's 1964-5 World's Fair exhibit some eight years before the TBC's first performance. Did Continental charter the initial Ray Charles work? Were your words "... commissioned by the Texas Boy's Choir ..." intended to show appropriate compensation to the author? Or did the TBC commission the work before '64? Seems puzzling that neither Continental nor TBC comments on the other party.

Thanks for helping me understand.

Ches

: 12183 S0/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
19-Oct-03 13:31:12
Sb: Compliments and Query
Fm: "Larry Ford" > INTERNET: fordla@aoltel.net
To: Ches Looney [73016, 1336]

Hi Ches,

Thank you for your compliments about my website. Also, it's great to hear your children benefited from membership in children's and youth choirs. I had the good fortune to have been able to sing my Junior and Senior High School years in the school's boys choir and the 'a cappella' mixed choir.

The history of "The Continental Soldier Suite" is an interesting one. You are correct in that the work was originally written by Ray Charles for the Continental Insurance Company of Hartford, Connecticut for the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. The original title was simply "Cinema 76" and was used as background music for historic dioramas at the Continental pavilion.

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In 1964 George Bragg met Ray Charles and it was Mr. Charles suggestion that the Texas Boys Choir perform "The Continental Soldier Suite" as a costumed performance in the years leading up to the Bi-Centennial in 1976. Mr. Bragg agreed and work was begun on rescoring the work for boys voices. Buryl Red was retained to orchestrate the work and the finished result is what you hear on my website. It is the rescored and orchestrated work (essentially a new work) that was commissioned for the Texas Boys Choir. I have in my archives a complete copy of the part sheets, written in Mr. Charles hand, that were used by the choirboys in learning this work.

I hope this explanation has been of help to you. Please continue to visit the site as I am constantly updating with new material. I also change out some of the audio material in the form of 'concerts' and such.

Please extend my warm regards to your wife and family.

Best wishes,

Larry Ford

fordla@alltel.net

webmaster@boychoirs.org

Webmaster

Boychoir - Past, Present and Future

<http://boychoirs.org>

"A boy sings ... a beautiful thing." from the Texas Boys Choir documentary
A Time of Waking"

: 12184 (C) SO/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
19-Oct-03 17:57:27
Sb: Compliments and Query
Fm: Ches Looney 73016, 1336
To: "Larry Ford" > INTERNET: fordla@alltel.net

Larry,

Thanks for the explanation; I suspected it might have been something like that. Our (adult) choir director's wife directs children's choirs and I've passed along the website url to them. I'll also pass along the interesting history of the Continental Soldier. Today's post 9/11 environment probably enhances the pleasure of that suite.

Regards,

Ches.

: 12189 (C) SO/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
19-Oct-03 19:03:29
Sb: Compliments and Query
Fm: Ches Looney 73016, 1336
To: "Larry Ford" > INTERNET: fordla@alltel.net

Hi Larry,

In talking with one of my sons, the question came up on which Ray Charles wrote The Continental Soldier. I know of at least two Ray Charles musicians: the very popular pianist/singer and I think I've run across one who is a black gospel singer and writer. Neither one of these seems likely as the author of the Soldier. Son Richard thinks he's heard that the Soldier was written by a Ray Charles active in composing music for commercials. Is that the one or is it yet another one?

Thanks,

Ches.

: 12190 S0/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
19-Oct-03 19:39:09
Sb: Compliments and Query
Fm: "Larry Ford" > INTERNET: fordla@alltel.net
To: Ches Looney [73016, 1336]

Hi Ches,

The Ray Charles who composed the "Cinema 76" and "The Continental Soldier Suite" is the one who had an orchestra and, I believe, was part of the Perry Como show. He also provided the accompaniment for several popular singers during the 40s and 50s. So it's possible this is the same Ray Charles your son is referring to.

The other Ray Charles I know of is a blind, black pianist/singer whose music I also enjoy.

So I guess now the question is "how many Ray Charles' are there?"

All the best,
Larry

: 12180 (C) S0/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
19-Oct-03 09:37:04
Sb: Unusual Query
Fm: Ches Looney 73016, 1336
To: Paul a. Gray@cna.com

Paul a,

I have an unusual (I suspect) query. In 1964-5, Continental Insurance had an exhibit building at the New York World's Fair which showcased Cinema 76. This was a slide show of animations featuring Revolutionary War heroes and heroines, some well known, some not. The slides were accompanied by music written by Ray Charles celebrating the Continental Soldier. Records (the old 33 1/3 rpm "LP" phonograph disks) were sold for the now-remarkable price of \$1.68 plus 0.32 shipping charge! I have one of these prize records and now the query. Is CNA the present day firm that was Continental Insurance in 1964? If so, is there any way the slide show could be obtained? In the post 9/11 era, the Continental Soldier story would be a likely popular seller on a DVD.

Thanks for your time,

Ches.

From: Gray, Paul a
Sent: Monday, October 20, 2003 8:55 AM
To: Soehngen, Michael J.
Cc: 'CLooney@compuserve.com'
Subject: FW: Unusual Query

Mike,

Thought I would forward this to you. Don't who might have info about this, but I know it is not the Property underwriting dept.

Thanks.

Paul a K. Gray

Assistant to Dan Rockwell
CNA Property
CNA Plaza 28 South
Chicago, IL 60685
312.822.6235
312.817.3349 Fax
paul.a.gray@cna.com
<http://www.cna.com>

: 12193 SO/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
20-Oct-03 14:22:25
Sb: Unusual Query
Fm: "Soehngen, Michael J." > INTERNET: Michael.Soehngen@cna.com
To: Ches Looney [73016, 1336]

Thanks, for asking, Ches. No, we are not the Continental who had a sentry/soldier -- that was Continental (NY) which we Continental (Chicago) bought in the mid-late nineties. Memorabilia such as the slide show would not have been retained if in fact it was even in the former Continental archives.

: 12221 SO/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
22-Oct-03 20:18:18
Sb: Ray Charles query
Fm: "Charles G. Hill" > INTERNET: chaz@dustbury.com
To: Ches Looney [73016, 1336]

>>I saw your website giving information on Charles Raymond Offenberger (another Ray Charles). Is this man the composer of the Continental Soldier Suite first heard at the New York World's Fair as Cinema '76 and later re-orchestrated for treble voices and a full orchestra as "The Continental Soldier Suite" for the Texas Boy's Choir?<<

I believe it is.

Eric at Renaissance Man's Potpourri (<http://yankeesfan.blogspot.com/>) reports as follows:

<text inserted>

A funny thing happened today that shows how the infinite areas of diverse subjects on the Internet can sometimes cross paths in unexpected ways. The other day I had taken some of my souvenir LPs from the World's Fair to the Wheaton College Library to dub them to cassette (where facilities are available to do it for nothing if you furnish your own blank cassette) and one of them was the souvenir record of the Continental Insurance Pavilion which featured an animated film called "Cinema 76" and seven songs about numerous figures from the Revolutionary War (done in a folk song style that today's audiences would not latch onto easily). History teacher that I am, I decided to surf the net to find out more about the seven people profiled (only three of which I was familiar with. Others included Deborah Sampson, a young woman who enlisted in the Continental Army by passing herself off as a man).

Imagine my surprise when one of my searches ended up at a page about the Texas Boys Choir, which in 1974 had performed this obscure collection of songs from the Continental Insurance Pavilion. The site even had the full concert available for downloading! However there was no mention of the fact that these songs had originally been done for the World's Fair and the impression was left that they had been "commissioned" specifically for the choir (in anticipation of the Bicentennial).

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I left an entry in the guestbook explaining that the songs originally had been done for the Cinema 76 program at the Fair, and later the webmaster replied to me explaining that he had passed on my entry to the former director of the Choir who confirmed what I'd said but that the composer (whose name is Ray Charles, but who in later years had to start billing himself as "The Other Ray Charles" to avoid confusion with the singer) had done some revisions in the arrangements to suit the needs of a Boys Choir and full orchestra so that the effect had been that of a new commissioning altogether. The composer had not objected to the use of the term "commissioning" being used in the programs for the concerts at the time. Nonetheless, the webmaster said he would be revising his page eventually to acknowledge the Fair's role in creating this program of songs and will eventually link the World's Fair site to his. Since he was unfamiliar with the fact that these songs had been commercially released before on LP, he asked for a copy of the Fair album and I will be sending him a cassette dub tomorrow.

</text inserted>

Since Offenberg did, in fact, bill himself as "The Other Ray Charles" during much of his career, including the period in question, I am persuaded that he is, in fact, the composer.

Hope this is satisfactory. There is a World's Fair site at <http://www.nywf64.com> which may lead to further corroboration, though I didn't catch any on the most obvious pages....cgh

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Charles G. Hill | chaz@dustbury.com | www.dustbury.com
If we don't change direction soon, we'll end up where we're going.

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#: 12222 (C) SO/CompuServe Mail [MAIL]
22-Oct-03 21:48:19
Sb: Ray Charles query
Fm: Ches Looney 73016, 1336
To: "Charles G. Hill" > INTERNET:chaz@dustbury.com

Charles,

Thanks for the added info. I also contacted the TBC webmaster and received a similar response to that received by Eric; however, I suspect Eric got to the TBC webmaster first because he was aware of the World's Fair version when he responded to me. Interestingly, the TBC version omits the song about Alan McLane. Since the WF version was titled "Cinema 76", the TBC version was titled "The Continental Soldier Suite", the orchestration of the two was quite different, and both had the same composer, I suppose "commissioning" is acceptable and copyright issues are unlikely to arise. I contacted Continental (CNA) and learned the Continental Insurance that sponsored the WF version was Continental (NY) which had been purchased by Continental (Chicago) in the 90s and no records exist giving info on either the music or the slide show according to a CNA spokesman.

I agree with your opinion based on what you've learned. It does appear that the music selections in question were both composed by "The Other Ray Charles".

Thanks for your response.

Ches.